Around the World With Bryan

Constitutional Government of Japan—Power of the Emperor Since the Overthrow of the Shoguns—Parliamentary System, Political Parties and the Leaders of Japan—Public Ownership in Effect in Many Directions—National Problems

BY WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN.

The Government of Japan is a constitutional monarchy in which the Emperor not only claims to rule by divine right but by right of divine birth. He is described as Heaven born, and according to the accepted history there has been no break in the family line for 2,500 years.

Among no people on earth has there ever been more universal respect shown, or implicit obedience yielded, to the reigning family. There never has been a revolt of any consequence against the Emperor, although there have been numerous conflicts between the Shoguns. For about 1,200 years, from 670 to 1868, the Shoguns were, however, the actual rulers, and while they never questioned the sovereignty of the Emperor they did not allow him to retain much more than the empty title.

The Shoguns were military rulers and a number of them were men of great force and executive ability. First, the Fujiwara family controlled the country through the shogunate for nearly 400 years; then for a century the Taira and Minamoto families alternated in the exercise of power; then came the Hojo family and others of less importance, until finally the Tokugawa family became supreme in the shogunate and continued in power for something like 300 years.

The Emperor lived at Nara until about 1600, when the capital was moved to Kioto, where it remained until less than forty years ago. Tokio, on the other hand, was the seat of the Shogun power, and there is a very noticeable difference between the two cities.

The Shoguns fortified their castles and required the feudal lords to keep headquarters in Tokio. One cannot go through the palace in which the Emperor lived permanently without noticing how plain it is as compared with the castle (both at Kioto) in which the Shogun resided for a few days during his annual call upon the Emperor.

While it may seem strange that the real rulers never attempted to become Emperors in name, it only shows their intelligence, for by insisting upon the recognition of the royal family they were probably more successful in maintaining the real authority than they would have been had they questioned the divine right of the immemorial rulers.

OVERTHROW OF THE SHOGUNS.

During the early part of the last century there began to be a reaction against the Shogun, and when he agreed to the treaties opening the country to foreign intercourse his action was taken advantage of by the friends of the Emperor. When the feudal lords of Choshu attacked the foreign ships at Shimonoseki Strait the Shogun was compelled to pay an indemnity of $3,000,000 and attempted to chastise the Choshu leaders.

His forces were defeated and he died soon afterward. The Emperor seized upon this event and the influential lords of Choshu and Satsuma encouraged him to abolish the shogunate, which he did in 1868. The new Shogun accepted the situation without a struggle and those of his followers who attempted a resistance were soon routed.

Everything in modern Japan dates from 1868, which is called the Restoration. While in the Restoration the Emperor was acknowledged as the sole and absolute ruler in whom all authority was vested, still it was really the beginning of constitutional government, for the Emperor voluntarily promised his people a Constitution, a promise which was not finally fulfilled until 1889.

The fervor of patriotism that restored to the Emperor his original authority wrought wonders in Japan. The feudal lords came forward and voluntarily turned their vast estates over to the Emperor and relinquished the authority which they had exercised over their tenants; then they joined with the samurai (their former retainers) in supporting the Emperor in abolishing all social distinctions. From that day to this the country has grown more and more democratic, the reforms working from the upper classes down.

THE CONSTITUTION.

In 1889 the Constitution promised by the Emperor was promulgated. It was prepared largely by Marquis Ito, who visited Germany and modelled the document after the Prussian Constitution.

The legislative power is vested in a Diet consisting of two houses, one resembling the English House of Lords and the other resembling our House of Representatives. The upper house is composed of the Princes of the royal blood, Marquises (these sit by virtue of their rank), Counts, Viscounts and Barons selected from among their respective classes, men of erudition or distinguished service appointed by the Emperor and one representative from each prefecture or State selected by the highest tax payers.

The members of the Diet, except those who sit by virtue of their rank, receive 2,000 yen ($1,000) per year. The members of the House of Representatives are divided among the States in proportion to the number of franchise holders; last year they numbered 323 and were voted for by 750,000 franchise holders. These franchise holders numbered less than 10 per cent. of the men of voting age, there being a property qualification which excludes from suffrage more than nine-tenths of the adult males.

The Emperor appoints the Governors of the various States and these need not be selected from the States over which they preside. The Emperor has the right to convoke and prorogue the Diet and to dissolve the House of Representatives; he also has the right to issue urgency ordinances when the Diet is not in session, the same to be submitted for approval to the next session.

THE BILL OF RIGHTS.

The Constitution contains a bill of rights. Among other rights the Japanese subjects shall enjoy freedom of religious belief "within limits not prejudicial to peace and order and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects," and "within the limits of law" they shall enjoy "the liberty of speech, writing, publication, public meeting and association." After the Tokio riots which followed the announcement of the treaty with Russia an urgency ordinance was issued restraining the press, and certain newspapers were suspended under this ordinance, but it is probable that this urgency ordinance will be vigorously discussed at the coming session of the Diet.

The Emperor is assisted in the discharge of his executive duties by a prime minister and nine department ministers; besides these, he has the advice of a privy council, composed of Elder Statesmen, of which Marquis Ito is now the president.

Each State has what corresponds to our Legislature, and each city has a council. Both of these bodies are elective, and to the city council is intrusted the selection of the Mayor.

They have a judiciary, federal and local, appointed for life, but no jury system. Among the laws is one forbidding aliens to own property, although this is avoided to some extent by long time leases. There is also a law by which a debt descends with the property to the oldest son, even though the debt may exceed the property.

EMPEROR OF JAPAN. MARQUIS ITO.

Through the courtesy of the Hon. N. W. McIvor, former Consul-General at Yokohama, and now engaged in the practice of international law, I had an opportunity to meet a number of Governors and Congressmen and found them, as a rule, an intelligent and accomplished body of men, many of them having finished their education abroad. Their most famous minister of finance, Count Matsukata, bore some resemblance to J. Pierpont Morgan.

They have politics in Japan. The promise of a Constitution seems to have been given by the Emperor before there was any general agitation for it, but, as about twenty-one years elapsed between the making of the promise and the realization of the hopes excited by it, there was a period of discussion.

LEADERS IN PARLIAMENT.

As early as 1874 several of the Ministers joined in a petition asking for the promulgation of the promised constitution. Their memorial being disregarded, they resigned their offices and became the founders of a democratic party. They call themselves Liberals, and their efforts resulted in an imperial rescript issued in 1881 fixing 1889 as the date for the beginning of constitutional government. Marquis Ito is now the leader of the Liberal party, which had 130 members in the House of Representatives in 1904.

In 1882 Count Okuma organized the Progressive party, which had last year a membership of ninety in the House of Representatives. This is known as the party of the opposition, Marquis Ito's party being the power behind the throne.

There is not as much difference in these parties as between the platforms of the two leading parties of our country, but of the two Count Okuma's party is the more radical. The Count himself is a born leader and exerts a large influence upon the politics of his country.

When Premier some years ago he lost a leg by the explosion of a bomb thrown with murderous intent by a political opponent, but it did not diminish his zeal in the prosecution of reforms. The fact that there were in the last Diet 130 who styled themselves independents shows that there is a considerable body to which the opposition party can appeal when the Minister makes an unpopular move.

JAPAN'S LEADING POLITICAL QUESTIONS.

Besides the party organizations, there are a number of societies formed for the study of political questions. There are economic associations in a number of the cities composed of the leading business and professional men. I met the members of these societies at Tokio, Osaka and Nagoya, and was impressed with the attention that they are giving to economic problems.

They have in Tokio another organization, called the Political Economy Association, which deals more directly with matters of Government. The society formed by the men who were educated in America, known as the Friends of America (Baron Kaneko is one of the leading members), takes a deep interest in all matters relating to government and political economy.

The leading political question in Japan to-day, in so far as it affects domestic affairs, is whether the Cabinet shall be selected by the Emperor regardless of the prevailing sentiment in the House or be made to conform to the will of the people as expressed through their representatives. At present the Emperor's councillors are chosen at his own discretion, and the States of Satsuma and Choshu have had a controlling influence in the selection of the Emperor's advisors.

The democratic sentiment of the country is at this time crystallizing in favor of the demand that the Emperor take for his Premier the leader of the popular party, as the King of England does. However much this reform may be delayed by circumstances, it is bound to come if Japan is to recognize the right of the people to govern themselves.

In the cities sanitation furnishes a most difficult problem. At present there is little sewerage, although there is a pressing need for it.

CHILD LABOR.

In the industrial development of Japan the people must meet the problem of child labor and the length of the working day. Women now work twelve hours in the factories, and one cannot see them and the children at toil without asking whether Japan can afford to impair the strength of the next generation for any advantage which may be derived from such long hours and such youthful labor. This subject is likely to be brought before the next session of the Diet.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP.

In some reforms Japan has moved more rapidly than the United States. Wherever she has water works in her cities they are owned and operated by the municipalities. She also has a telegraph system and a telephone system operated by the national Government. Telegrams are sent at the same rates to all parts of the empire, and the service is satisfactory.

The telephone service is not so good, for, while it is all right as far as it goes, the system is not extended as rapidly as the demand requires. In Tokio, for instance, those who want to install telephones have to wait until some one discontinues his 'phone or is willing to sell it, and a bonus is often demanded. If the local telephones were owned by the city and only the interurban lines managed by the Imperial Government, the service would respond more quickly to the needs of the community.

The Japanese Government also owns and operates a part of the railroad system, and in doing so employs none but native help. I travelled on both the Government and private lines and could not see that they differed materially so far as efficiency was concerned.

The first class fare is about four cents per mile (in our money), the second class about two cents, and the third class (nearly all the travel is third class) about one cent. A reduction of 20 per cent. is made on return tickets, a reduction of from 20 to 30 per cent. on commutation tickets, and a reduction of from 45 to 80 per cent. on season tickets for students. This reduction to students might be imitated to advantage in our country.

The Government road is all or nearly all double tracked and has the latest safeguards for the protection of passengers at depots. The Japanese are much given to meeting friends when they arrive and escorting them to the train when they leave, and this custom has led to the sale of platform tickets for one cent (in our money).

EDUCATION AND LABOR.

Japan has two educational problems: First, the increase in the percentage of those going from the primary to the middle schools, and, second, the cultivation of an ideal which will connect a respect for manual labor with intellectual advancement.

To-day a large majority of Japan's people work with their hands and at labor which forbids the wearing of good clothes. It is probable that the education of the masses will show itself to some extent in improved methods and in the more extensive use of animals and machinery, but there must remain a large amount of work which requires daily contact with the soil.

The rice crop grows in the mud and cannot be harvested by machinery; the fields, too, are so small that they cannot well be cultivated with the aid of animals. The farmers' boys and girls are now going to school and gradually adopting the European dress. Will they be content to return to the paddy fields when they have finished their education?

Some of the young men pull rickshaws in the daytime in order to earn money to attend school at night. Will their learning make them unwilling to do hand work? Or will they substitute the cab for the rickshaw?

Japan faces the educational problem that confronts the civilized world, namely, how to put behind a trained mind an ideal which will make the educated citizen anxious to do service rather than to be waited upon. Tolstoi's solution of the problem is "bread labor"; that is, physical toil sufficient to produce what one eats.

This, he believes, will teach respect for labor, and by dignifying it unite all parts of society in sympathetic cooperation. Has any better solution been proposed?

With a broader educational foundation Japan will find it necessary to extend the suffrage. At present the right to vote is determined by a strict property qualification, but there is already an urgent demand for the reduction of the tax qualification, and it will not be long before a large addition will be made to the voting population.

COREA A DELICATE PROBLEM.

The most serious national problem with which Japan has to deal is that imposed upon her by the attempt to extend the sphere of her political influence to Formosa on the southwest and Corea on the northwest. The people of Formosa do not welcome Japanese sovereignty, and an army of some six or seven thousand is kept on that island to support Japanese authority.

Corea presents a still more delicate and perplexing situation. For more than a thousand years a feud has existed between Japan and Corea, and two attempts have been made by the former to invade the latter, the last about 300 years ago.

At that time a number of captives were carried back to Kogoshima, where they, as before mentioned, introduced the art of making what has since been known as Satsuma ware. The fact that the descendants of these captives have lived in a colony by themselves for three centuries without intermarrying with the Japanese is sufficient evidence of the feeling entertained toward them by their captors.

To aggravate the matter, Japan has been engaged in two wars, first with China and then with Russia, over Corea, and it was also the cause of one civil war in Japan. Having driven China from Corea ten years ago, and now having driven Russia out, she is undertaking to exercise a protectorate over the country.

When it is remembered that Corea is separated from both Manchuria and Siberia by an imaginary line and that the Coreans themselves regard the Japanese as intruders, some estimate can be formed of Japan's task. In a future article on Corea I shall speak of this subject more at length, but the matter is referred to here because the experiment is as dangerous to Japan as it is to Corea.

Will Japan be able to accomplish what other nations have failed to do: exercise a colonial power without abusing it and without impoverishing herself?

REAL GRAFT RULES IN SOUTH AMERICA.

Turk O'Fallon Gives a Few Pointers on the Genuine Holdup Game.

"I'm after reading in the paper that Buena Ventura, that same lively huddle of 'dobes on the west coast of Colombia, was lapped into a few by a tidal wave the other day," observed Turk O'Fallon, citizen of everywhere, who knows Tangier and Truxillo as well as he does Topeka and Tallahassee.

"'There goes my ice plant,' said I to myself when I read that, for the big wave, it seems, came nigh to covering the town up.

"Not that I have owned the ice plant for a long time. I started it and dug for the price to start it, at that. If it had been in this country I could have said that I owned it, but a white man never owns anything in Greaserland, particularly if it pays dividends. He just thinks he owns it. It doesn't take him long to wake up.

"I fell into Buena Ventura in '94 from Callao, where I'd been brokering in nitrates. I was on my way by short hauls back to Frisco. The first thing I noticed about Buena Ventura was that it didn't have any ice manufacturing plant and that it needed one. I took a couple of days sounding the citizens on the ice plant topic. They could see it, and said so. The need was there. Many other towns on the coast of smaller size had thriving ice plants. Why not Buena Ventura?

"I would have the grand welcome for my ice plant, they told me. So I nudged along to the alcalde and the president of the municipal council. Yes. They would bestow upon me, and with the gladness, a site, outside the town limits, for my ice plant, charging me nothing, not even taxes, for would I not be the benevolent benefactor, the alleviator, the—well, that kind of junk.

"So I plodded on up to Frisco and nailed the angel. I made him see it, and he fell easy enough. I'd started an ice plant before, in Mazatlan, Mexico, and I knew where to go to get the machinery. I got it and shipped it down to Buena Ventura. Then I got a fellow in Sacramento who knew how to make ice, and down to Buena Ventura we went together. We had the plant built and going, turning out fifty tons a day and the demand growing all the time, within two months after we lit. All told, we had nineteen employees, all Greasers of Buena Ventura, to help my icemaker make the ice, drive the delivery wagons and dog-rob around.

"I had a money maker. There are a lot of rich ones in Buena Ventura, and they didn't growl about the 75 cents a hundred I charged them for the ice. I stood to get out on the investment and have a good game, free of incumbrance, inside of about eight months.

"That is how good it was looking to me when one forenoon a Colonel of the Colombian army called upon me. He wore about nineteen pounds of bullion gilt in the way of epaulettes, cross belts, sashes and such like, and he was very affable. I slid a highball into him, and told him that I liked army folks—that I'd been in a few armies myself, which wasn't any stall at that. I showed him how ice was made and was there all through with the hospitality thing—but I knew my Colonel man hadn't come out to see how ice was made.

"When he seemed about ready to go it came out. I had some fine, tall youths in my employ—nineteen? That was the number, I told him, and some of them were all of 5 foot 4. The brave, blithe boys they were, said my Colonel man. Soldier material, too.

"That, in truth, was the object of his visit—to inform me—reluctantly, he was bound to confess, but duty, Señor, and all that—to inform me that the State required the services of my nineteen brave youths. None of them had yet, it seemed, performed his conscription service in the Colombian army—although, oddly enough, about a dozen of them were wearing some kind of a bum looking army uniform when I hired them. They would be required to enlist at once, the Colonel informed me, with deep sorrow showing all over him, and his mitt over his cardiac region. The reservists were being allowed to return to their homes, so that the fresh youths who had not yet served—well, the Señor—that was me—could see how it was.

"I saw all right.

"I got the Colonel into my four-by-four office, closed the door and put it to him square on the blunt—the Greaser grafter likes the out and out talk when it comes to the duff.

"'How much apiece to keep these mugs out of the army,' was what I asked him.

"Well, he began to shrug and to eat mustache and to say that the service the brave youths were required to render the State was of such a valuable character that——

"'How about $5 gold apiece to make 'em immune from army service,' I broke in there.

"The Colonel thought that that figure might meet the requirements of a heavily burdened and exacting State, and——

"So I slipped him the $95 gold and he executed the skiddoo sign, clinking his spurs and his easy chink and clanking his sabre real gay like as he went.

"Five days later the president of the municipal council rode out to the ice plant on a white mule. I invited him in, showed him how ice was made, trickled a high one into his midriff and then got him into my office and waited for the touch.

"The grand, strongly built, hard working nineteen young men of Colombia I had in my employ—that was the chant he began on as soon as the office door was closed.

"'Not such a bad bunch of tired runts,' I told him. 'They were starving to death when I picked 'em up. Now they're a pretty sleek-looking lot, but they play the mandolin a whole lot too much during working hours to suit me.'

"The president of the municipal council told me that I should make allowance for the musical temperament of the Colombian people. I told him that I did that, but that the musical temperament didn't make much ice. Then he came out with it.

"The roads about Buena Ventura had become so bad, he told me, sadly, owing to heavy rains, that it was considered to be the duty of all loyal sons of Buena Ventura to turn out on a certain number of days and work on the improvement of the roads. In fact, the municipal council had summoned the citizens to this work, and the summons was imperative. The penalty for refusing the call to work on the roads was very severe My nineteen brave, strongly-built young men——

"'How much,' I asked the president of the municipal council, quick. 'I can't spare these dubs for a minute, of course, if I'm to go on making ice. Tell you what I'll do. I'll give you $2 apiece to get 'em off the road making job.' I named the $2 apiece figure to flag him if he intended to make it $5 a throw.

"The figure, $2 apiece, was small, he thought—very small. The brave nineteen boys would be required to work two weeks on the road improvements, and $2 gold apiece—the amount to obtain their immunity seemed far too small. He started to go, with many deep bows. I called him back by naming my top figure, $3 apiece, and he took it. I passed him the $57, and he went away on his white mule, looking as sad as if somebody had roped him and taken something away from him.

"A week later I had a call from a Colombian General, who had a list to starboard from the heavy loops of golden junk that he wore on the right side of his tunic. I was an adoptive son of the United States of Colombia, was I not? Very well, then. He had called upon me to converse upon the subject of the national defence. The autumn manœuvres of the army were about to begin. He desired to have me present at a part of them. I would be surprised at the efficiency I saw, he told me. Then, after taking his leave and really starting away, he came back.

"There was a little matter he had forgotten. My nineteen employees, all loyal and brave sons of the republic, they would be required to be put through their first paces as soldiers at the manœuvres—there was to be a corps composed of temporary recruits. Their services would not be required for a greater period than three weeks, and——

"I asked the General the 'how much' question before he got any further and before he could answer I told him that I thought $3 a head ought to be about right. He couldn't see that for a minute and in his soreness he came near giving himself away.

"Three dollars each, he expostulated, when another man, a man smaller in rank than he, a General—of course he referred to the Colonel who'd snagged $5 a head at the first try—and he quit there.

"Well, I jumped the figure to $5 a head quick for fear that he'd want to hunch the ante. He took it and went away with his $95 gold, pretty chipper.

"Ten days after that the commissioner of the public health of Buena Ventura sought me out. He seemed to be downcast about the state of the public health of Buena Ventura. He told me there had been an outbreak of smallpox in the near neighborhood of my ice plant—but I hadn't heard anything about it. He was very sorry, but he would be compelled to vaccinate my employees. I told him that'd be all right—to go ahead and vaccinate 'em.

"He was pleased, he assured me, to observe that I took his information so pleasantly. Of course, I was aware of the fact that, in the hot countries, it took a vaccinated man from two weeks to a month, all the time lying still, to recover from a vaccination? I did remember that vaccination down in the tropics 'takes' something fierce, generally. As he started to go the commissioner of the public health, still pleased, he assured me, that I was so pleasant about it all, informed me that the State charge for vaccinating persons living in the neighborhood of a smallpox epidemic was $3 apiece, and that employers were required by the Government to pay this charge when the vaccination was compulsory, as it would be in this case.

"Then it was up to me again, of course. I told the commissioner of the public health of Buena Ventura that I'd stake him to $3 a head if he just forgot to vaccinate my nineteen brave boys, and the figure was satisfactory to him. He frankly owned to it that he had a somewhat unreliable memory, and that he could undertake to forget in the matter of which I spoke. So I gave him $57, and away he went, humming a plaintive piratical air.

"You don't want to fall to dreaming that I was a mark for giving up this way. I'd been up and down and in and out of the two coasts, west and east, of Greaserland for about fifteen years, all told, and I knew that if I didn't cough up each time the swoop was made, no matter how politely, my icemakers 'd be leaving me in the lurch with the point of a bayonet in the back of each of them. I once superintended a mine in Ecuador where 400 men had been marched off that way, to do 'army service' because the superintendent who preceded me had refused to dig. I dug while I ran the mine, and dug often, but when the strikes got too strong and I kicked they ran me out of Ecuador on the charge that I was framing up a revolution. So I knew where I was at when I fell for these touches in Buena Ventura.

"But when, about a week after the visit of the commissioner of Buena Ventura's public health, the chief of police of Buena Ventura, or the commissioner of the public safety, as they called him, dropped in at the ice plant to tell me that the Buena Ventura police force was so decimated owing to the large number of men down with smallpox—and there wasn't a case of smallpox in Buena Ventura—that volunteers would be required to patrol the streets to assure the public safety, and that my nineteen brave boys would be called upon for their share of that service, I could see that my ice making game was coming to an end in that town. The touches were coming too strong, and I knew there'd be no end to them.

"The top cop wanted $10 a head, or $100, to strike my Greasers' names from the list of available volunteer patrolmen, and I told him to go to the devil and take my nineteen brave boys with him. I fired the whole lot and shut down on ice making to await developments. I knew there'd be no use getting other men to take their places, for only Greasers were available, and one Greaser is as good for grafting purposes as another.

"A week after I'd shut down a British barkentine burned in the harbor of Buena Ventura, and the crew of fourteen men—Scandihoolihans, lime juicers, Down East Yanks, dinges, all sorts—were thrown on the beach. I hired 'em all at good wages to go to work in my ice plant. They were glad of the chance, and so was I, for, as they were not citizens of Colombia, they couldn't be impressed into the army or navy or sewer cleaning department or anything else for the duff there was in it.

"They'd only been working two days when the commissioner of public health called upon me, very smooth and suave, and informed me that he'd heard that there was bubonic plague among my sailor workmen. He regretted it keenly, but he'd be compelled to take measures to protect the public health from so frightful a visitation as the bubonic plague if——

"'How much,' I asked him at this point.

"He assessed his forgetfulness this time at $15 a head, and nix the comedown would he make of it. That was where I quit.

"'You can make benevolent and philanthropic free ice for the benefit of the public health, bo, and the plant is all yours,' I said to him, and out I walked with my office dunnage and papers. I'd have been in debt to the Colombian Government about $25,000 gold, which means about forty octillions paper, if I'd stayed there another couple of months, and that wasn't getting rich in the ice business in Greaserland.

"You've got to show me any Greaser country—and I've hit 'em all up—where, if you sell a dozen toy balloons on the street, the commissioner on explosives doesn't declare himself in on the ground that your toy balloons are liable to get punctured and explode the first time you get too near a cactus, and that, therefore, they constitute a menace to the public safety."

FREAK BETS AT DRAW POKER.

MEALS USED AS CHIPS BY ARMY MEN ON A TRAIN.

A Livery Stable Bet on Four Tens—Spice of Humor Introduced Into the Game by an Earnest Worker in Chicago—The Lamb That Wouldn't Take a Joke.

"The funniest game of poker I ever sat in," said the army officer, "was an affair we got up on our way across the continent from Frisco.

"You know what a troop train is—no diner, no anything, and a hot scramble for chow during twenty minute stops at meal stations. Well, one evening we were outlining our miseries over a particularly bum supper, when some one suggested a little game.

"Everybody shook his head. That small village by the Golden Gate had cleaned us out completely.

"'Can't afford it,' said a captain.

"'Rats,' put in the senior Major. 'Let's make it a practical game. Let's play for our meals.'

"The idea took, and in a few minutes we were perched about a table doing some of the loonicst stunts you ever laid eyes on. Each man had a lot of slips of paper, and when he bet he wrote down what he was putting in, signed his initials and threw the slip in the pot.

"The limit was one meal. This is about the way the talk went:

"'A jack for a cantaloupe all around.'

"'Captain, you are shy your cantaloupe.'

"'Nobody opens. Sweeten it a pickle.'

"'I open for a mince pie.'

"'I see that mince pie and boost it a watermelon.'

"'I see the raise, and elevate that watermelon a glass of cream.'

"'And a meal.'

"'I call that meal.'

"'It's your food.'

"And so on. When the dust cleared away I had coming to me a meal, nine pickles, two apple pies, a glass of milk, a cheese and a bottle of beer. It was the most substantial return I ever got from a card game."

"I saw a curious bet once—but it was a good deal more serious," remarked the planter. "It happened down at Evergreen, Ala.

"Six of us were playing—two travelling men, a livery stable owner, a couple of other cotton growers and myself. The limit was the beautiful but lofty North Star. Until the hand I'm talking about nothing unusual happened.

"A five dollar jack had been passed all around twice. The deal was on my right. I got a pair of kings and opened for thirty. The travelling man on my left raised me fifty.

"The others dropped, to the dealer, the livery stable man, who tilted it a hundred more. I threw down my kings.

"The travelling man saw the hundred and drew one card. He had had aces up. He pulled the ace of spades. The dealer took two, and caught the fourth ten to his threes.

"The opener bet a hundred. The dealer raised him a hundred. They whipsawed back and forth that way for a few seconds. Then the travelling man said:

"'Is my check good for a thousand?'

"'It is,' answered the dealer.

"The travelling man scribbled off a check and tossed it on the table.

"'And a thousand,' he said.

"The dealer hesitated.

"'Is my livery stable good?' he asked.

"'With the thirty horses?' demanded the travelling man.

"'Thirty-one,' answered the dealer, counting the lame bay mare.'

"'Yes,' said the travelling man weakly.

"The dealer wrote out a check for a thousand. Then he scratched on a piece of paper, 'I. O. U. my livery stable. C. B. T.,' and pushed it in the pot.

"'And my livery stable,' he said.

"The travelling man turned pale, and had the sense to drop. That was the biggest bet I ever saw.'

The fat man moved heavily.

"Jokes and funny bets may go sometimes at poker," he said, "but the man who tries to inject a spice of humor into that little game is monkeying with the buzz-saw, all right. I saw a couple of wits eat dust once on account of their spirits—and it was a lesson to me.

"We will call them Albert and Herbie. They were fresh from college, learning their papas' businesses on the road, and the heavy bad man was their lay. They met me on the train about an hour out from Chicago.

"When they found out that I was bound for the same hotel they got as thick as thieves, and started to book me for a game that night. I thought it looked easy, so I agreed.

"When I showed up in their room I found that they had corralled two quiet, earnest workers, who wore big diamond pins and solitaire rings, and waxed their mustaches. I had never laid eyes on them before—and they had never laid eyes on each other, they said.

"When I saw them fingering their papers for the first time I wished I was out at prayer meeting instead of at that particular board. However, nobody seemed to get much action, though the game was table stakes, and Albert and Herbie were rolling in dough. Each had a wad of yellow bills in front of him that would make a bank president's mouth water.

"It was on toward midnight, when all of a sudden the tallest worker pulled out his watch.

"'The devil,' he said, 'it's after eleven. Don't deal me a hand. I have to telephone. I'll be back in five minutes.'

"'We'll take another drink, and wait for you,' said Herbie.

"'All right,' answered the tall one—and he disappeared.

"We took our drink, and sat waiting.

"'I've got an idea,' cracked the other earnest worker to Herbie. 'Let's stack the deck on him and give him a roaring good hand. Then when he puts his whole wad up we'll spring it on him that he's an easy mark.'

"Albert and Herbie thought that was such a good thing they could hardly wait to push it along, but I lung off.

"'This game,' I said, 'has cost me too much to monkey with it. Go ahead—but I'm out.'

"They arranged for the tall one to get four aces. Albert was to deal. Herbie was to give a fake cut.

"When their lamb came back the jokers started, and everything went smoothly. The cut passed off O. K.

"The short worker had made it a five calls ten proposition. I dropped. The tall one pushed in his ten. Herbie giggled and tooted him fifty. Albert went fifty more. The short one bettered that a hundred.

"The lamb looked dazzled and shoved out five hundred shekels. Albert and Herbie could hardly restrain themselves. They rolled out yellow boys in bunches.

"The short one got permission to introduce a check. So did the lamb. I began to get leary, and carelessly swept my wad off the table and put it in my pocket.

"Herbie and Albert were nearly in hysterics. Between them they had more than five thousand dollars in bills on the table. They never had seen such a fine piece of humor before.

"Finally, they all called, the money being out, and drew cards. As the whole outfit was stripped, they simply showed down. Nobody else had anything—and the lamb raked in the pot.

"Then the suppressed mirth broke out.

"'Hold on there,' cried Herbie, roaring with laughter, 'that was all a fake!'

"'Yes,' said the short worker loudly, 'we stacked the cards.'

"The lamb smiled in a sickly way and kept on arranging the bills in a pile,

"'Hold up there,' said Albert, nervously, 'That was only a joke, you know. We arranged the hands.'

"The next thing I knew a six-shooter flashed into the light and the lamb stepped back, covering us with a wicked black muzzle.

"'Hands up, gentlemen,' he said. 'No flim flam game like that goes with me.'

"'But,' sputtered Herbie.

"'Hands up!' And up they all went while the lamb packed every dollar in his pockets.

"'Now,' he said, 'if any one follows me he takes his own risk.'

"He stepped out in the hall, locked the door on the outside and we never saw him again.

"I had no personal interest in the affair, as I had my wad snug in my jeans. But if I hadn't had it there I'd have kept close to Mr. Shorty. When we looked for him to take him to the police station as a witness he couldn't be found—high or low."

FAITH IN SNAKES TO CURE.

All Sorts of Queer Requests Made to the Reptile Dealer.

The man who makes a living buying; selling and exhibiting snakes was looking over his correspondence. "There's nothing over which people are so hysterical, superstitious and ignorant as snakes," he grunted. "I'd just like to get hold of the fellow who originated the idea that there was healing virtue in a snake."

The snake man picked out an envelope from his morning mail. "This correspondent wants to be cured of rheumatism," he said, "Just listen: 'I want to get hold of a nice, healthy snake's liver. I have had the rheumatism for thirty years, and I have read about a man who was cured by swallowing a snake's liver. If a snake's liver will cure me, I am ready to swallow two or three of them. If you are willing to dispose of half a dozen livers at a reasonable price, I am ready to buy them.'

"I have had numberless demands for snakes' hearts to cure all sorts of diseases. Here's a fellow wants one to cure consumption.

"Seekers after health are not the only people who write to me. Here's a Chicago woman who wants me to send her a cunning, harmless green snake, with brown markings. She says she wants to make a sensation at a fancy dress ball, and is going to wear a costume to match the snake, or some such thing. She says she is going to twine it around her wrist like a bracelet, and then have fun when her partners discover it is alive.

"Then, there's a doctor in a little Massachusetts town writes me to send him a snake that does not exist. He practically asks for a rattlesnake without rattles. Listen to his description: 'I am in want of two serpents. The ones I have in mind are about two-thirds grown, with black heads and white bellies. They run out their stings without opening their mouths, and they have a little round hole in front of their mouth, through which they run out their stingers and tongues. Their eyes are black like beads, and they are called a species of the rattlesnake, but they have no rattles. They also have a long, peaked tail. I will pay $2.50 each for them. There are plenty in New Hampshire, but few in this State. I want them alive and uninjured.'

"The request for snakes to rid a place of rats is a sensible one, for rats will scurry out of a house where they see a serpent, and never come back. I have often rented my snakes out for such a purpose. If it were possible to permit the bull snakes to run the streets, they would settle the gypsy moth problem in no time. They'd clear the trees of gypsy moths in a twinkling."

A Confusing Epitaph.

From the London Evening Standard.

A correspondent says he noticed the following curious epitaph in Woolwich Churchyard:

"Sacred to the memory of Major J. Brush, Royal Artillery, who was killed by the accidental discharge of a pistol by his orderly, 14th April, 1831. 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.' "